

Night of the Blue Moon

by Nightrain05

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Summary: Because the Ochimizu Medicine has caused grief in the future, one girl confidently sends herself back in time in order to halt the creation. She has about ten years to stop it before the future is set. She cannot return to whence she came. It doesn't help when she ends up catching the attention of a certain Oni... Rated M out of Paranoia.

1. Greetings!

PLEASE READ THIS BEFORE CONTINUING!

Hey Readers!

Jeez, I watched the whole first season starting yesterday, and it caught my attention. They're all so hottttttt...even the antagonist (bad guys)

Drool

Ah! Sorry...anyways, I would like some more reviews before continuing this story. So, if you like it, please review!

Ah, the girl in here is my OC, I'm hoping to draw her up soon, so be prepared! She's so pretty...

Blinding light

Yikes! Again...

So, this is my warning, I do not own this nor any anime in the world. Just my OC. I don't own music, or clothes, or tampon brands or chocolate. Nothing. Just a humble writer who's writing to her heart's content, thank you.

**Also; this is was rated T. Now M cause I'm paranoid. You know, in case the characters act a little perverted or whatever. It's rated

for a reason, mind you. Please don't complain about it. If you don't like it, either skip it or just stop reading.**

I am saying this respectfully and sincerely.

So, enjoy! XD

By the by, I just opened up a poll. I'm not sure who I want her to end up with, so I want your opinions! Please vote!

As a P.S., I may or may not change the rating. I'm starting to get a bit paranoid. No need yet, but when Kazama comes along I shall become EXTREMELY paranoid about it. Just saying. Not yet though.

Go ahead and read now lol.

2. Night of the New Moon

The harsh slapping of feet against the unfamiliar and uneven pavement caused my heart to race. My breathing was ragged, yet I was not tired. It was simply a habit.

Why? Why had I been sent to this era?

Of course, I knew why. But maybe they could have clothed me in attire normal for this era instead of sending me here, in the middle of winter, in denim shorts and a tank. Not only was it cold, but I alarmed a couple of random guys with katanas, and now they're after me.

Of course, maybe mocking them hadn't helped.

I took a sharp turn and ducked behind a couple of barrels. Just in time, too, because they hesitated. A moment later, I heard ragged screams. Curiosity may have killed the cat, but I had to know what was going on.

Peeking from behind the barrel, I widen my eyes, horror stricken. Two monsters with white hair were tearing at the men who'd been after me.

I called on my katana, which came to me out of thin air. I waved my hand in a wide arc before taking hold of it.

Now bored of the overkill they'd caused, the monsters started searching me. I clutched the handle of my katana, ready and waiting. So these were the demons that had been created...

Just as one found me and prepared to attack, it was stabbed from behind. I got to my feet right away before the sharp edge of a blade was pointed at me. There were three men; one with tied purple hair, one with red hair, and the last with long black hair.

"Don't try to run, or I'll kill you."

Seriously? I couldn't help but smile. If only they knew of the blood I carried. I clucked my tongue at him, placing my hands casually behind my back and allowing my katana to disappear.

"Now now, is that any way to talk to a young woman such as myself?"

The red haired man scoffed and looked me over.

"What is she wearing? Weirdo."

My long blue hair waved with the gentle breeze, begging to break free from the ribbon which confined it. I crossed my arms.

"Speak for yourself, idiot."

He curled his lips, amused. The man pointing his katana at me refused to move.

"Either you come with us, or you die here. Choose."

I laughed at him.

"Awww, cute thought."

"What?!"

"I'm not about to die, nor am I going anywhere with you lamebrains."

I jumped, landing expertly on his katana. I stuck out my tongue mockingly.

"You wanna bring me somewhere? How 'bout we go for some food, I'm hungry."

He tensed and swung his katana twice; once to get me off, and once to attempt to hit me. Unfortunately, he'd given me the leverage I'd needed to land on the low roof of the house behind me.

I made a pouty face at the man.

"Well, that wasn't nice. A simple 'no' would have sufficed."

He scowled and lifted a hand, signaling to the other two men.

"Alive or dead, I don't care."

I shook my head, smiling happily.

"Perfect! I wanted to have some fun."

The red haired man drew his katana.

"Funny, that was our goal as well."

I hopped twice in place, just to get my legs pumped.

"Ok, if you can lay even a finger on me, I'll be a good girl and go with you. Don't bother with the swords, though. It won't do you any good. It's called 'tag'. You guys are it!"

I didn't wait to see their reactions, just turned heel and ran. I hopped a couple of roofs before I heard two sets of feet from behind.

I giggled as a katana came out to caress my cheek.

However, it was only the side of the katana, so no injury was made. Not that it would have mattered either way...

"Sorry, that doesn't count!"

I turned and ran backwards, eyeing my pursuers.

"Wow, you guys are fast! It's more fun playing with you guys than those other idiots."

The guy with the purple hair jumped forth in an attempt to grab me. I tilted my body only slightly to the right, giggling when he stumbled slightly. His facial expression remained calm as he continued forth.

A gap between the roofs was coming up. Instead of jumping, I waved at the two and let myself fall. When my feet hit the ground, I jerked left.

"Adios, buddies!"

"Oh really?"

I knew he was coming, but I decided to give them a break. Besides, they'd be suspicious if I didn't seem tired and continued this way. I gasped as the man with the red hair jumped out of nowhere and grabbed my arm.

"Haha...Ouch! Ok, you won the game. You don't have to be so rough."

He grinned slyly.

"Your fault for playing around with the Shinsengumi."

I smirked. Found you.

It took awhile to reach their headquarters. I humored them when they moved to bind and blindfold me. I was left alone in a room once we arrived.

Instead of sleeping, I took my time taking the binds off. I giggled when I'd finished.

"I'd say that took me just under 5 minutes. Not my personal best... Oh well."

I investigated the plain room and frowned.

"So, I found the Shinsengumi...they're the one's trying to make that sick medicine, right?"

I leaned my back against the wall and rested my chin atop my knees.

"If I don't make them stop their experimentation in the next ten years, it'll end up being just the same. What's more, I won't be able to go back a second time. This is my only shot..."

I dozed off like that.

The next morning, a monk-like person came to my room. I'd woken when I heard him coming from a few doors down, but pretended to wake only after he opened the door. He gave the binds scattered on the floor an odd look before turning to me and looking me over cautiously.

I simply shrugged and put out my arms so he could bind my wrists.

"What's the point..."

He'd muttered it softly, but I could help but agree. They really shouldn't have expected less from me.

He led me around to a door. I ignored him and watched the snow fall, smiling happily. He opened the door and asked me to enter. I let my eyes wander. The room was full of men. I wrinkled my nose at a foul stench.

Looking through the men once more, I stuck my tongue out at the only one in the room wearing glasses.

"You should bathe more often. Honestly, take better care of yourself."

A couple of the men turned to look at him. His eyebrows had shot up in surprise. A guy with dark red hair burst out laughing.

"Getting reprimanded even by a prisoner? Honestly, Sannan, take the hint."

A couple of others chuckled. The man with the black hair seemed frustrated.

"Enough idle chat. We have business to take care of."

I looked over at him.

"Ohhh it's Mr. Killjoy. Come to visit?"

That brought in a few more chuckles, and made the man look even angrier. Before he could make a move, the man beside him spoke up.

"Sorry, he's always like that."

"I could've guessed..."

He raised an eyebrow and coughed. The monk guy took the hint and closed the door before hurrying off. The man turned back to me.

"I'm the leader of the Shinsengumi, Kondou Isami."

I chuckled.

"You're named after condo's? How fun."

He seemed confused at that and frowned uncertainly before

continuing.

"Yes, well...I hear you witnessed a gruesome fight last night?"

I nodded easily.

"Hard to miss, too. You really should watch those experiments of yours."

Everyone in the room stilled and looked at me in surprise.

"You know about-"

"Yeah. Ochimizu, correct?"

I frowned at the older man.

"Don't you know how childish such experiments are? Such power is unnecessary."

The black haired man rose slightly.

"If you know of our secret, you must die."

Koudou put out a hand.

"No. Stop trying to jump down her throat."

I chuckled at his words. Of course, dirty thinking hadn't started in this era. He turned back to me.

"Better start explaining yourself. My men are quite rash, and I wouldn't want you getting hurt."

I nodded.

"I'll explain, but I need your full attention. My words hold truth, though they may seem a little extraordinary."

He nodded. Before starting, I turned to look at the black-haired man.

"Care to make your guest some tea?"

3. Blossom of Hope

I sipped at the green tea given to me and sighed.

"Right, down to business.

Your project is to successfully brew a mixture capable of giving humans heightened senses and healing abilities, basically making the person obtain and mimic Oni-like powers. The first to conduct research on this was Koudou, a doctor in Edo."

The red haired man chuckled.

"Well, someone's done their homework."

I narrowed my eyes at him.

"Actually, yeah. I had top grades...in my history class."

That shut his mouth. Kondou just waited for me to continue.

"He's been missing from society for a few months at this point. You, the Shinsengumi, are looking for him. His first few experiments were made on members of the Shinsengumi. They're usually locked up, but on occasion they break free and wreak havoc."

However, it's only at night. Daylight saps their energy, and can cause them to disintegrate into dust."

I gave the man with the glasses a quiet glance.

"The research is being continued by certain members of the Shinsengumi. They were asked to continue experimentation by the Bakufu. Honestly, I find it pathetic that such a strong organization would take orders that could put others in jeopardy."

This seem to raise uncertainty, but it remained silent.

"After much training, I've been sent into this era to stop the production of Ochimizu. I can't return to my time."

Koundo raised an eyebrow.

"So you're saying you're from a different time frame?"

I nodded.

"Precisely, and the future is bleak because of that medicine. It's more like a poison. A lot of the people in my time are locked in their homes because Ochimizu got out of control, and the demons made by drinking it are on rampage. I'm the only hope for the future."

Uneasy glances are made around the room. Uneasy and doubtful.

The man named Sannan coughs abruptly.

"I don't see why we'd use Ochimizu for over a year or two. It's simply for the oncoming war. After awhile, we'll get rid of it. It's just temporary."

I smile sadly.

"Is that what you really think? It's actually the surviving Oni that are trying to clean the city back home. The information I've gathered states that Ochimizu was produced for ten years."

It died out only briefly before it resurfaced and created monsters."

A younger looking boy with long hair scoffed.

"As if the Oni would help us humans."

I gazed at him coldly, and he shivered.

"In the future, the Oni and humans get along much better than you think. Without those monsters, there would be peace. There's no war, no power hungry politicians. There are still brutes and drunks, but they are easily subdued. The only grief is caused by those monsters."

Kondou sighed.

"I have listened. You won't be killed, but you are going to have to stay here. As to your story, we'll have to discover what to trust and what to doubt."

The red haired guy chuckled mildly.

"I say we just kill her. All her rambling is giving me a headache."

Kondou reacted quite angrily to his words.

"Don't say outrageous things!"

The man blinked innocently.

"Calm down, it was just a joke."

I muttered under my breath.

"Not funny."

Sighing, the black-haired man looked me straight in the eye.

"Take her back to her room."

I jerked away as the purple-haired guy got up and reached for me. My eyes glinted, and I knew that annoying hint of red marred the otherwise pure violet.

"Don't touch me."

I hissed it dangerously.

The man hesitated.

"She acts like a frightened, injured animal."

I gritted my teeth, trying to calm down. He took the opportunity to take hold of my upper arm and lead me out.

"Hey!"

He hadn't shut the door, so everyone saw me wrench around and bite him. He was caught off guard, and I used that to my advantage, kicking him back onto the floor. The black haired man jerked up.

"We won't hesitate to kill you if you insist on resisting."

I bit my lip angrily, causing blood to enter my mouth.

"When I ask not to be touched, I mean it."

I turned heel and walked towards my room. Slamming the door behind me, I undid my binds. The blood had already stopped, and I was irritated.

"As if they could kill me, even if they tried!"

I threw my binds on the ground and huffed angrily.

I let myself fall on my back and look at the ceiling. My feet rested near a wall, and I started kicking it lightly.

After an hour, I ended up dozing off. Waking and rubbing my eyes, I stood and walked over to the window to look outside.

"Cold..."

I gazed at the falling sun.

"I only have to fast another few days..."

Resting my elbows on the ledge, I closed my eyes in annoyance.

"Care to explain why you're camping out outside my room, pervert?"

The red haired man laughed.

"Sorry, I'm not interested."

His eyes flickered, and I smirked haughtily. Yeah, right.

"We're all switching around to watch you. You know, making sure you don't get any bright ideas."

"Stupid, that's your job."

He laughed.

"Well, it's nice to know that we have someone with a real sense of humor around here."

I blinked.

"It wasn't a joke, I seriously think you're an idiot."

He went board stiff and fell onto his side, then pouted.

"That's not nice..."

I giggled.

"What's your name?"

He got up and rubbed his head.

"Souji."

I nodded.

"And yours...?"

I lowered my eyes.

"My name..."

I turned to look deep into his eyes.

"My name is Saki."

4. Glimpse

I opened my eyes against the bright light that streamed in through my window.

I'd been stuck in that dull, empty room for who knows how long. A different person was appointed to watch me every hour or so. It was annoying to be constantly watched, but I bore it.

I'd quickly learned the names of my little entourage...

There was Souji Okita, who was my most frequent guard. I don't know why he was around more than the others, but it didn't matter. His hair red and his eyes were green. He made sure to threaten me with death every now and again. I just called him an idiot and ignored him.

Next was Hajime Saitou, the one with the long purple hair and a mix of purple and blue eyes. He was either silent or spouted long, apparently meaningful sentences. They probably would be meaningful if I wasn't so blinded with anger most of the time.

Then there was Heisuke Toudou. He looked younger than the rest, but he had fire and spunk to make up for his looks. His hair was auburn, and he had bright green eyes. He was quiet when people were nearby, but we had managed a few decent conversations otherwise.

Yamazaki Susumu watched me throughout the night. He had spiked light brown hair. He reminded me of a ninja. Figures, he always watched me from a distance. Under his scrutiny, I certainly wouldn't get far.

Then were the tweedles, as in Alice in Wonderland tweedles; Shinpachi Nagakura and Sanosuke Harada. The latter had deep burgundy colored hair while Shinpachi frequented a weird purplish color. They watched me in a pair and ended up fighting a lot.

Fun, like watching live entertainment.

Lastly was Keisuke Sannan. He was the one who came the least. He usually just wrote in a book and ignored me. Meanwhile, I'd make faces near his head. He was the one with the glasses and the strange forest colored hair.

Toshizo Hijikata never came to watch me. I think he has a grudge against me or something.

He'd recently left with Sannan on some mission, and it was almost midday. As I sat up, I winced. Ouch. No more wrestling with Heisuke.

Not when I have to let him win.

Considering no one was in the room or outside the inner door, Souji was my guard. I checked near the window. Yup.

He looked up at me.

"Hey, don't get sneaky and try to leave or I'll kill you."

I leaned against the window frame.

"I have a question."

He raised an eyebrow.

"Do you like me calling you an idiot or something?"

He laughed at my question, moving to answer until Saitou came down the walkway. In his hand he carried a food tray with an array of questionable articles placed on it. I couldn't hide the distaste in my eyes.

"Hey, you think I can cook sometime?"

Saitou gave me a weird look. Souji just shook his head.

"Obviously not. You're stuck where you are."

Heisuke ran up behind Saitou.

"Hey, it's time to eat. You coming or what?"

Saitou shook his head.

"I have to attend to my duties. I'll be there later."

"Don't blame me if your food gets eaten."

Saitou's eyes fell a little. I noticed easily, and my own eyes softened. Lifting my head, I gave Heisuke a glum little smile. He jumped at seeing it, and hesitated.

"Why don't we just bring her to eat with us?"

Everyone perked at the suggestion, but Saitou refused to give in that easily. He attempted to put up a bit of a fight first.

"I was told not to let her out of that room."

I sighed in exasperation.

"Oh, come on, even with all of you watching me, I could get away easily. Besides, I've been stuck in here way to long!"

Souji's eyes glinted teasingly.

"Seriously, she'll end up getting fat."

I glared daggers at him before returning a soft gaze at Saitou. He shrugged uneasily.

"Just for now, since Hijikata isn't here."

I wasted no time getting through the window. I plucked my tray out of Saitou's surprised hands and skipped off, humming happily to myself. Finally! A bit of freedom.

The boys were at my heel quickly.

"Jeez! Someone's happy."

There was a bit of commotion when I went into the main dinning hall, but after awhile everyone just relaxed and went with it.

News came in a bit later that Sannan had gotten a serious injury while off with Hijikata. I had to think seriously before moving to make an offer.

"If the injury is that bad, I can make it heal. But there will be a condition."

Everyone in the room paused, looking unhappy and uneasy. Saitou turned away.

"We'll discuss that when they return."

I sighed in frustration. There was no getting to these guys. I tried another approach.

"Your future is bleak unless you let me help you guys. A lot of you are going to die. I don't want that. If I'm going to be stuck in this era, I want to be with my friends."

'Friends' rolled off my tongue cautiously. I had already begun to see them that way, but that might not mean much to them. No one replied, so I just quieted and finished my food before being led back to my room by Saitou.

On our way to the room, my patience dwindled. I wasn't ready to spend more time in the accursed room.

"Hey, Saitou, can I stay out a bit longer?"

"No."

I pouted cutely.

"Please?"

"I'm sorry, but no."

I tilted my head to the side mischievously.

"Well, I tried asking nicely."

I jumped onto the roof with ease and started jogging. He shot after me right away.

"You must return to your room."

"Sorry, I'm not ready to get back in my jail cell."

We ran around for a good half hour. He'd get close, and I'd jump over his head and jog the other way.

I finally behaved when he threatened not to let me eat with the group anymore. He seemed exhausted when he returned me to my room and Yamazaki took over.

Oh well. At least now I won't get fat.

5. Running Red

As Heisuke and Shinpachi started another brawl over the food, a vein threatened to pop near my temple. I'd been granted mealtimes to stretch my legs and hang out with the group, at least, while Hijikata was gone. I was grateful, but that didn't make the constant arguments any better.

Everyone in the room looked annoyed. Finally, I couldn't take it.

"Shinpachi!"

He turned to look at me, still angry from his stolen food. I jerked him down and shoved some of my own food in his mouth. My actions shocked everyone in the room, but a couple looked relieved that I'd settled him down. However, his face had turned an interesting shade of red.

"You got a fever or something?"

I knew he didn't have a fever, but I loved teasing and this was too good an opportunity to pass up. Besides, playing dumb was also my best option for now.

"I'm fine!"

Heisuke pouted and sat on my other side, away from Shinpachi.

"No fair, he got your share. Now I'm gonna feel bad for taking his food."

I shrugged nonchalantly.

"Doesn't matter to me. It'll happen whenever you guys start taking each others food, so maybe you'll learn."

Souji had been watching us quietly and finally spoke up, a grin on his face.

"In that case, Shinpachi, you could steal my food anytime."

I shot him a warning glance and raised an eyebrow. However, before I could say anything, Hijikata opened the door and walked in.

"I just got back."

Everyone in the room flinched. Ok, everyone but me. I just watched in

amusement.

"Ah, hey Toshi..."

Sannan walked in and sat down, and Hijikata followed. They sat near Kondou and reported. Heisuke started fidgeting with his chopsticks. I almost laughed. We all knew how Hijikata would react when he finally noticed me.

"How's your arm, Sannan?"

"It's not as bad as it looks. I was just a bit too careless, that's all."

He looked around the room, noting my presence.

"No need for concern. Ah, I think I'll go to bed early."

"What about your food?"

"I'm not hungry. Well, then, good night."

He left casually, but I could see he was pained. Awhile after he left, a couple of the men asked about the true severity of the injury. It made Hijikata hesitate, and he refused to answer. He finally glanced around the room and noticed my presence. I simply waved and grinned.

"Welcome back, Sir Bumpkin."

He blinked coldly.

"Who said you could come in here? Why are you out of your room?"

I feigned confusion and scratched my head lightly.

"Which do you want me to answer first?"

He closed his eyes, and I could almost see him counting to ten. Several of the men spoke at once.

"I invited her."

"I gave her permission."

"I said she could."

His eyebrows raised with each claim. Finally, he just sighed and started to eat. Heisuke protested strongly.

"Come on, it's only during meals."

Souji's eyes glinted wickedly.

"If there's a problem, just stick to her like glue."

I narrowed my eyes at that. I sighed and got up.

"Whatever, I'll go back to my room and eat there."

I didn't wait for anyone to protest. I picked up my tray and left. However, I'd kind of lied. I ate above my room instead. On the roof. It got a bit chilly, so I whispered a few words under my breath. A cozy sweater appeared, draped over my shoulders.

My skills were quite enhanced, which allowed me to conjure whatever item I wanted.

Of course, bringing in an Xbox wouldn't help much without electricity.

I heard a bang and a curse. I knew who was there, but I acted as surprised as...humanly, possible.

"Hijikata?"

He rubbed his head, his meal scattered on his tray. Oh, well. Still edible. I moved forth and helped him up. His lips quirked into a small smile.

"Thanks. I don't know how the hell you could get up here while balancing your food."

I winked.

"Try practicing since childhood."

He sat himself beside me on the roof.

"That long?"

"Of course. When you're chosen to go back in time, you're taught to perfect a bunch of stuff."

We both ate in silence before he cleared his throat.

"I will permit you to come eat with the group, but only during mealtimes."

I raised an eyebrow questioningly.

"What changed your mind?"

He chuckled lightly.

"Try having the whole room in an uproar because you left."

He shook his head.

"For such a boyish looking girl, you've really made a mark for yourself."

I frowned.

"How am I boyish looking in the least?"

He looked me over a moment before searching my eyes.

"You've no figure, and having your hair up doesn't help."

Blunt much?

"You're the one who asked me to look like a guy."

He shrugged, and I just shook my head.

"I made an effort to look like a boy, that's why."

I laid a hand to my seemingly flat chest, then ran my fingers through my silky smooth hair.

"I never use makeup, which helps. You're lucky the council from my time didn't pick some girly girl to send over."

I looked him straight in the eyes.

"I have a figure, but I choose to hide it."

He scoffed disbelievingly.

"How could you do something like that?"

"Bandages have multiple uses..."

That made him quiet down.

We ate in silence after that, then he bid me good night and next day, I decided to talk to Sannan. I saw him out in the yard practicing with his blade.

"Sannan?"

He turned, surprised. I could tell he'd been in deep concentration, or else he would have at least heard me come up behind him.

"Do you have a minute?"

He nodded and followed me to sit on the steps.

"What do you need?"

I leaned back and looked up, quiet for a moment or two. Finally, I answered, my eyes closed.

"I can heal your arm."

He looked at me, an eager gleam filling his eyes.

"However, I have just one condition."

His eyes darkened.

"Abandon the Ochimizu project. Get rid of any notes you may have, get rid of any of the mixture you have hidden. Destroy it completely."

He turned away.

"I can't do that."

He got up and walked away. I sighed and shook my head. The man was stubborn.

I decided to go early for lunch. Nobody was around, so I made my way to the kitchen, where Saitou and Souji were preparing the food. I struggled to keep from laughing.

"You guys prepare the meals?"

Souji nodded.

"We all take turns cooking."

Two arms came out of nowhere and fingers tickled at my sides. I laughed uncontrollably.

"Ah! Heisuke, you cheater! My weakness! Eek!"

He chuckled and finally ceased his actions, grinning from ear to ear.

"Surprise! Saki!"

He regarded the other two in the room.

"Sannan wants to eat in his room again."

"Not like he ever touches his food..."

My eyes shined thoughtfully.

"Mind if I take his food to him? I could make him a little something."

The three men exchanged glances. Finally, Souji shrugged.

"If you really want to."

I waited until they left the kitchen. I heard Hijikata nearby and decided I didn't want to deal with his complaints, so I just hid myself until he passed.

I had to call up several different ingredients to prepare the food. I waited until I was just outside Sannan's door before allowing my canine teeth to elongate. I bit into the center of my palm and let three drops of my blood to mix into his food.

The cut healed as quickly as it had appeared, and I licked up the remaining blood before opening his door.

6. Bloodlust

Sannan jerked up in surprise when I opened the door. I placed the food in the entrance and looked up at him.

"I made you something special. This should dull the pain in your arm."

His eyes flickered when he looked down at the food. To him, it looked

like the food he was used to eating with the group. He raised his gaze to mine.

"I'm not all that hungry..."

I shrugged.

"Suit yourself, but you won't get better unless you eat it."

I was about to turn around and leave when his hand shot out to grasp my wrist lightly. His eyes were uncertain, yet determined.

"Stay with me awhile and I promise to eat."

I glanced at the paperwork on the nearby table. I looked him over wearily.

"Fine."

I waited in silence for him to release my wrist before stepping into the room and closing the door. He positioned himself in front of the tray of food and began to eat. After the first couple of bites his eyes widened, and he looked at his arm in awe.

"Is something wrong?"

He turned away.

"No, nothing. Any special spices in here? My arm seems to have numbed."

I shook my head innocently.

"Nope, it's probably just your mind playing tricks on you."

His eyes were skeptical, but he finished his food eagerly.

"You're a fine cook, Saki."

"Thank you."

I looked over at the papers again.

"Is that for Ochimizu?"

He followed my gaze and nodded uncertainly. I just sighed.

"I'll take your dishes, now."

He put a hand over the tray, causing my eyes to meet his.

"Why are you so against the medicine? It's fine if contained, and we deal with it when it gets out of hand."

I shook my head at him.

"I've already explained. Besides, it's completely unnatural. Isn't being who you were born to be enough?"

He moved his hand and watched in silence as I picked up his tray and

left the room. It was too late to eat with the others, so I took my food to the roof to eat in the company of the moon. It was near it's crescent stage, the day I could end my fasting. My eyes were now specked with red, making me look a bit more dangerous than usual.

The next day I spent washing clothes. I figured the motion would be appreciated. Souji watched from the ledge of the walkway while Saitou practiced several motions with his sword.

It was nice being outside. I glanced at Saitou from the corner of my eye. He noticed it right away and ceased moving momentarily.

"Is there something you'd like to say?"

I nodded, getting to my feet.

"I want to help you guys search for Koudou. He's the father of this girl I knew."

He raised an eyebrow before returning to practice.

"I'm afraid not. There's no one who could escort you."

I sighed.

"Chuzuru only stayed in Edo because of our conversation..."

Souji perked up momentarily.

"Didn't you just arrive sometime at night and get chased around before bumping into us?"

I nodded.

"Correct, but that doesn't mean that I didn't contact someone from this era while I was still in my own time."

He scratched his head idly.

"What kind of place has the knowledge to be able to contact people from different time frames? I don't get it."

I shrugged, turning my attention back to Saitou.

"Let me join the guards who leave for patrol. I wouldn't be a bother."

Souji shrugged.

"You'd have to be able to protect yourself. It can get dangerous. We know you can jump around with style, but can you protect yourself?"

"Damned straight I can."

"In that case, allow me to test you."

I turned to glare at Saitou before smirking.

"Are you sure? I wouldn't want to hurt you."

He examined my face coolly.

"If you have no self control, then use the blunt side of your weapon."

I froze uneasily.

"My katana's in my room, I'll be back."

I ran off before the two could respond. I knew better than to conjure a weapon in front of them. Just as I neared an enclosed space, I noticed a strange scent on the wind. However, when I turned around, all that remained was a tree branch that had been disturbed.

I called forth my katana and went over to inspect the area, coming up with nothing but a golden strand of hair. I conjured a fire at the tip of my finger and disposed of it.

When I returned to Saitou and Souji, both looked a little peeved. Souji spoke up.

"No leaving without one of us. We'll get in trouble if Hijikata finds out you just disappeared. If you do that again, I'll kill you."

I waved off his warning, turning to face Saitou.

"You ready?"

He nodded slightly, refusing to draw his blade. I just waited, causing him to tilt his head to the side.

"Why are you hesitating?"

I smiled.

"I'm not; a true warrior won't attack unless provoked."

His lip quirked approvingly.

"Very well."

He drew his blade and swung at the air once before advancing.

I waited until his first swing, which had been aimed for my arm; the one holding the weapon. I dodge easily, merely shifting my weight. He swung twice more, both leveled at my right arm and leg.

I couldn't afford him actually wounding me, so I had to end this quickly.

I gave him a few more shots before letting my body ease around him like water flowing past a rock, then tapped his behind playfully with the side of my blade.

He whisked around and lunged. I hopped onto his blade and pointed the edge of my own at his throat. I yawned mockingly.

"Satisfied?"

He seemed slightly angered by my actions, but let them go with ease.

"Yes."

I got off the blade and sheathed my katana. Saitou mimicked the gesture and gave a slight bow. Souji clapped loudly.

"Impressive! I've never seen anyone come even close to Saitou like that. That's pretty amazing."

I gave him a small smile.

"It was nothing."

Saitou glanced at me momentarily.

"We'll ask the lieutenant for permission to bring you out with us."

I nodded my thanks. Souji spoke up.

"However, if you get in the way or try to escape, we'll kill you."

I rolled my eyes.

"Yes, ma'am."

He chuckled before making his way inside.

We faced Hijikata, and he easily gave me permission to attend the rounds. He warned me to listen to the captain at all times. The Choushuu had been acting out lately, and he didn't want me endangering the others.

Souji grinned.

"I'll be sure to abandon her if we meet up with some rogue warriors, ok?"

Hijikata frowned.

"Of course it's not alright!"

Souji chuckled. Heisuke came with Souji and I on my first patrol. I asked pedestrians on the street if they knew where Koudou could be found, but I knew it was all for naught.

Finally, a strange looking man pointed me to Masuya. I nodded my thanks and turned to leave when I heard several of our men start shouting. Souji turned and rushed over.

I waited a few moments before continuing on. Surely I'd be fine on my own.

As I entered the shop, I noticed a group of sketchy looking men eyeing me. I ignored them and began speaking to the shopkeeper. One of the men pointed at me.

"Brat, you were with the Shinsengumi!"

He pulled out a sword and rushed at me. I knew that Souji was on his way, and drawing my katana would only cause trouble.

I dodged him easily and watched him fall to the ground before turning to eye the rest of his group.

"Weapons, gentlemen?"

I clucked my tongue at them chidingly.

"Naughty, naughty."

The man on the ground moved to stab me in the leg, but before I could react, Souji had already knocked him out. The rest of the group came in to deal with the men.

I noted the presence of Yamazaki and Shimada in the crowd. I knew they were spying, but couldn't help winking their way.

Back at headquarters Souji and I were both complimented as well as lectured by Sannan. To my surprise, Hijikata stepped in and took some of the blame for us.

Turns out one of the men we'd caught was a spy. The Choushuu planned to set all of Kyoto aflame on a windy day. In the chaos created by the fire, they would kidnap the Emperor and take him to Choushuu.

Because we'd apprehended one of their spies, it was assumed that they'd hold a meeting tonight to put together a back up plan. It was assumed that they'd meet at either Shikokuya or Ikedaya.

Kondou ordered for the Aizu clan to be notified while Hijikata went to gather the men.

When we all met up afterwards, there weren't as many soldiers as I'd primarily assumed.

"Is this really ok?"

"It should be fine."

The Aizu clan hadn't sent word. In my eyes, it meant they wouldn't help until the very last second in order to claim the glory. Typical.

Hijikata was eager to start the mission. I couldn't blame him; night had already fallen and the meeting would probably be starting soon.

Kondou frowned.

"We still don't know whether they're meeting at Ikedaya or Shikokuya."

Sannan looked over at him.

"They usually go to Ikedaya. I don't see why they'd go there after

all that's happened."

I moved to speak, then shut my mouth. It was all too clear where they would meet. They were probably counting on the commanders to read way too much into it, which they were. Even if I spoke up, their eyes were set. I could almost smell the bloodlust churning amongst the group.

The men were split into two groups; the lesser amount heading towards Ikedaya.

They left quickly, Souji sending me a wink before heading out the front gates. I pouted; they wouldn't let me go because of what had happened earlier. I hadn't gotten hurt, but because I was a girl, it was apparently too risky.

Sannan and I spent time together in a room, him idly lighting candles while I just waited.

3, 2, 1...

Yamazaki burst into the room.

"They're meeting in Ikedaya."

Sannan jumped.

"At Ikedaya?"

He was silent for a moment before looking up, his eyes ablaze. Yamazaki spoke up.

"I'll inform the Lieutenant at Shikokuya immediately."

"Please do. This is an emergency."

Sannan turned to me.

"Please go with him. It's more likely that the message gets through if you both go."

I got up and stretched, muttering under my breath.

"About time..."

As Yamazaki and I ran side by side in the dark of the night, I conjured my blade and angled it away from his view, attaching the sheath to my belt and keeping my hands free.

"You're Saki, right? I can't guarantee your safety."

I scoffed and smiled gently at him.

"Don't worry your handsome head, I'll be fine."

He didn't comment, but quickened his pace.

We were stopped by some men on their way to headquarters. Yamazaki stopped. I simply slowed my pace slightly.

"Do you have business with the Shinsengumi?"

The men hesitated. Yamazaki narrowed his eyes and leaned in close to me.

"Keep going. Don't stop no matter what."

I grinned.

"With pleasure."

The men finally started attacking. I leapt up and landed on several heads before landing on the ground. Turning to run backwards, I waited until Yamazaki turned his back before elongating my canine teeth and pricking my index finger.

The streaming blood solidified and sharpened, resembling a whip. I made sure to force it to split into three and sharpen the edges before sending it out to kill several of the men surrounding Yamazaki.

My conscious cleared, I turned heel and ran at full speed, narrowing my eyes. If I didn't hurry, they'd go in without back up.

I reached the group with record timing. I didn't even stop, just relaying the message whilst getting ahead of them.

"They're at Ikedaya. Move it!"

No one questioned me and rushed to catch up.

When we reached Ikedaya, there were bodies strewn all over the place. I watched behind us as the Aizu clan finally showed their faces.

"Tch. They took their sweet ass time."

I looked up at Hijikata.

"You can take care of them, right? I'm going in."

He moved to protest then shut his mouth and awaited the Aizu clan.

I shot up the stairs after noting Shinpachi was alright. I raced into the first room I could find, only to freeze in mid step.

Souji was covered with blood, some of it being his own. He was facing a man with golden hair. My nose twitched momentarily before the small shards of red in my eyes began to grow. I was done fasting. Tonight was the night.

Souji projected himself towards the man in anger, swinging his blade. The man dodged easily and swung his own blade, which Souji barely escaped.

"Souji!"

The man jerked, shifting his gaze to me. Souji tried to use that to his advantage, but failed. The man chuckled mockingly.

"Is that the best you've got?"

He pushed Souji into the wall. He knelt, coughing up blood. I went to his side, trying to contain my anger.

"Souji, don't move! You're bleeding too heavily!"

A blade graced my cheek, and I turned my eyes to the man standing before me.

"Are you his friend?"

He cocked the blade.

"Get in my way and I'll kill you."

Souji got in his way.

"Don't you dare touch her. I'm your opponent."

I narrowed my eyes. The secret was out.

I sighed and pressed two fingers against a pressure point on Souji's neck, knocking him out. Getting to my feet, I allowed the flecks of red in my eyes to glow. They'd grown to cover almost my entire iris.

I wouldn't hide in front of this man.

"I pity you, you picked the wrong day to mess with my little friend."

I took out my katana and pointed it at him.

"Don't hesitate; I certainly won't."

He looked me over carefully, taking time to inspect my eyes. Finally, he withdrew his blade. I gritted my teeth.

"My job ended the moment the Shinsengumi got here. I have no need to fight you."

He turned, and a flash of silver later, his cheek was covered in blood. He touched the already healing cut in surprise, as if he hadn't expected me to actually lash out at him.

"Don't think you can just walk away after what you've done."

My voice was chillingly calm.

His hand rested on the handle of his blade, as if considering his options. Finally, he made his escape, jumping out the window. My eyes went ablaze, not a hint of violet to be seen.

"Bastard! Get back here!"

I leaned out on the balcony, but he'd already disappeared.

I helped the rest of the group bring home the injured. The small specks had returned, the rest of my eyes as violet as ever.

One of our soldiers had died, one greatly respected among was carried off by a few of the men. We walked through town, and even the wind seemed to compliment our bittersweet victory.

One thing was for sure; he would pay. Big time.

7. Soft White Moonlight

Breakfast was painfully quiet. The silence was unbearable, but nothing could break it. I placed a glass of water and a small packet of powdered medicine in front of both Sannan and Heisuke.

Amongst our group, only Souji was missing. Hijikata looked up at me curiously.

"Where's Souji?"

I refused to look him in the eye.

"I told him to stay in bed...I'll personally bring him his medicine tonight."

I couldn't bear to inform them of what I'd discovered when visiting his room this morning to wake him for breakfast. The scent was impure and caused me great anguish.

Souji was slowly developing tuberculosis.

It had been my own fault for not arriving on time, especially since I hadn't been able to avenge him.

The crescent moon would widen, preparing for it's next stage tonight.

And no one was to disturb us.

I ate in silence, watching Sannan wrinkle his nose at the medicine.

"My arm is all better...this is really unnecessary."

I sipped my tea and closed my eyes.

"Hijikata told me to give it to you. Are you sure you won't take it?"

A single look from Toshi caused him to down the whole packet at once. His lips curled in disgust. Heisuke had the same reaction.

I lowered my eyes. I'd spent most of the early morning removing shards of metal from Heisuke's forehead. Thankfully, the injury would heal just fine without any help. He'd merely been careless, though I gritted my teeth, wishing I knew who'd attacked him.

As I took out the dishes to be cleaned, Hijikata appeared behind me.

"Could you go with Harada on his rounds today?"

I lowered my eyes, which made him raise an eyebrow in question.

"No, I'm afraid I can't. Besides, I wasn't supposed to go on rounds today."

We stood in silence as he assessed me. Finally, he sighed and turned to go to his room, his eyes hinting regret and disappointment.

"It's fine. Next time, no excuses though."

I nodded and returned to my duties.

Of course, Harada and Shinpachi whined so much that I was forced to go. I decided to speed back the first chance I got.

They took me to view the opening for the upcoming festival. Bright lights and music filled the air.

I spent a part of the evening just enjoying my time before feigning a cough. This caused Harada alarm.

"Do you want us to bring you back?"

"Nah, I'll be fine on my own. Please, enjoy yourselves twice as much for me, ok?"

He seemed uncertain, but Shinpachi, the convincing drunk he was, brought him around.

I fled, my pace matching that of the wind in the still, cold night. We would be leaving tomorrow to aid the Aizu clan in their fight against the Choushuu. I was to accompany them.

I jumped onto the main wall, keeping a light, slow pace until I was near Souji's room. A couple of men passed by his room, but continued on their way. I jumped down, landing soft and soundless onto the grass.

I opened his door slowly, trying not to wake him. His breathing was heavy, and there was blood covering the side of his bed. Clearly, he'd been coughing. I closed the door and shifted near him.

I lifted his head carefully and laid it onto my lap. The leverage would help. Thankfully, he stayed asleep. His face, however, did not hold the regularly peaceful features of one resting, but more the ragged features of one going through deep pain.

I conjured a small bottle of water and allowed a small stream to enter his mouth. He was unable to swallow it, and he ended up coughing harshly. I lowered my eyes, putting aside the bottle.

"Souji...I'm so sorry."

I elongated my canine teeth.

"This is to repay my debt to you."

I bit into my palm, letting my teeth rest deep within the skin to keep it from healing too fast. I leaned back my head and closed my

eyes, allowing my blood to flow into my mouth.

Once I was satisfied with the amount, I retracted my hand and closed my mouth. I kept my eyes closed, knowing they glowed red and frightened that he would awaken and witness such fearful eyes.

The wound closed, and I could feel a small amount of blood trickle down the side of my mouth.

Very attractive.

I repositioned Souji's head before leaning down and pressing my lips to his. Small rivulets of blood coursed through my mouth into his. I couldn't help but note the heat rising from his mouth; he had a fever.

A small amount of blood streamed out the side of his mouth, but he was able to swallow the rest.

By the time his eyes had burst open, however, both that small trace of blood and I had gone, leaving him with the taste of copper on his lips and no knowledge of what had just happened.

Just the way I wanted it.

8. Ill Intent

We set out early the next morning. The air was still cool from the previous night, but the incessant chirp of the insects foretold of the coming heat. I shaded my eyes with a hand and followed the rest of the troop forth through the gates.

Sannan and Heisuke waved as we passed, and I shot them both a smile. I noticed Souji watching from his bedroom window, and gave a light wave his way. He smirked and vanished from sight, probably returning to bed.

Upon reaching the Fushimi Magistrate's Office, we were met by two imposing guards. I stood by Sanosuke as Kondou stated our business with the Aisuke clan.

"You were requested? I was never notified of this."

I gritted my teeth in anger. Only Sanosuke's arm held out before me ceased the violent actions I considered.

"Nonetheless, it was a formal request."

No matter how Kondou tried to handle the situation, it was for naught. They turned us away with very little consideration.

"...I'm tempted to wait until night falls to throw eggs at them."

Sanosuke chuckled lightly as we set out once more.

"It wouldn't change how they treated us, but I can't say it wouldn't bring a smile to a lot of faces if you did."

We set off to meet up with the Aizu clan. The sun had risen to it's highest point as we marched as one through the dusty dirt roads to our destination.

After Kondou met with a leader of the Aizu clan, we again set out, this time for Kujou. By the time we reached the Aizu camps set up there, the sun had sunken, setting beyond the waterline. I was eager to see the pristine water near the base; I needed to bathe.

We were met with more problems, and while Kondou went within the camp to speak to their leaders once again, I helped Saitou and Sanosuke set up camp, just a small ways away from the shoreline.

I stripped off my jacket and left it with the group. Saitou raised an eyebrow at me.

"Where are you going?"

I rolled my eyes and smiled.

"We've been walking all day in the boiling heat. I need to cool off."

Shinpachi wiggled his eyebrows suggestively before being slapped upside the head by Sanosuke.

I walked towards the water a bit before stopping and turning back to the group.

"No peeking or I'll carve out your right eyes!"

That caused most of the group to burst out laughing, aside from Saitou, who's lip merely quirked slightly.

By the time I got to the water's edge, I could only see the distant flickering of the camp fire. I slipped off my clothing and folded it into a neat pile, setting it on a nearby rock. I freed my hair from the black ribbon that held it in place, allowing it to flow in the gentle night's breeze.

I took my time untangling the bandages wrapped around my breasts, shivering when the cold caressed the warm skin. I almost gasped when I entered the cool water, rubbing my arms gently to get my blood flowing.

I dunked my head and scrubbed at my hair gently. I missed the modern convenience of shampoo, but I didn't want to stain the pure water anymore than I already was.

Lifting my head from the water, I turned to gaze up at the glorious half moon surrounded by stars. I set my eyes on my skin, which glowed in sync with the moonlight, and I admired the soft white light.

A rustle from the nearby forest caused me to sink into the water until everything from my shoulders down was hidden before glaring into the greenery. A few leaves flew onto the surface of the water, but nothing else could be seen within the looming trees.

The feet that disturbed the rocks near the water didn't alarm me. I simply shifted my eyes to look into Saitou's troubled ones.

"You need something?"

He held up a towel and scanned the tree line in silence. He avoided looking at me until at least the towel covered me.

"Thanks, I appreciate it."

He shrugged nonchalantly and gave me a quick once over before pulling me against him. The gesture surprised me, and I almost pushed him away before he hissed at me to be quiet. He shielded my small figure with the blue Shinsengumi haori that hung off him loosely.

He rested his chin atop my head while gazing off to the side.

"Please just bear this for a few moments."

Not like I had much of a choice...

I sniffed lightly, having difficulty finding the threat through his scent. He smelled like fresh rainwater. Through the rainwater was the faint scent of lime, which I knew didn't come from him. Ill intent stained the air and caused me to choke slightly.

My choking caused Saitou to look down at me quickly before returning his gaze to the forest. His hand moved to my back and patted gently. If only he knew that his efforts were useless, I'd only calm when the air cleared.

Shinpachi laid a hand on Saitou's shoulder, almost causing him to draw his blade.

"Hey, you alright? Where's Saki?"

I rose up on my toes and peeked up from under the cloth. The air cleared all at once, causing me to cough severely. The hand on my back stopped patting and rubbed instead.

"Shinpachi, can you investigate the area there?"

He hesitated momentarily before conceding. I breathed heavily and looked at the ground, muttering under my breath.

"He's not there anymore..."

Saitou ignored me, leading me back to the campsite, staying only for a couple of moments until I got out of the tent fully dressed before leaving me in Sanosuke's care.

He returned with Shinpachi about half an hour later, coming up with nothing, as I'd thought.

The men talked with Inoue about the soldiers and we were all told to keep watch throughout the night. I knew the person from earlier wasn't working with any of the clans...he was a lone sailor.

The group shared a bit of sake, and I began to get a bit drowsy. I could hold my liquor just fine, but I hadn't gotten much sleep over the past few days. Sanosuke glanced at me and smiled alluringly.

"If you're tired, you're welcome to sleep on my lap."

He and Shinpachi chuckled when Saitou gave them a look of warning. I just narrowed my eyes. They thought it was a joke, treating me as a woman rather than a soldier of status equal to their own. Fine with me.

"Really? I wouldn't mind."

My voiced purred, mimicking the satisfied rumble a kitten would make when being stroked. My words quieted the group, and Sanosuke's previous jokingly confident look shattered as I walked over to him and laid down comfortably, his lap acting as my pillow.

"Thanks for the offer, I really appreciate it."

I stifled a yawn, and the guys all exchanged looks. Saitou's was leveled, though I could tell he didn't exactly approve. Shinpachi just pouted jokingly, but his eyes were clear and knowing.

"Why does she get to sleep on your lap and I don't?."

His words caught the attention of the other two, and I guess they realized that they shouldn't treat me lightly. I was to be respect like any soldier there.

"Not like I'm gonna get up now."

I closed my eyes and let sleep overtake me. It was calm until the sun began to rise. It was cool, slightly windy. Windy...

A loud noise woke me, as well as the scent of smoke. I jumped off Sanosuke and started running, not even bothering to tie my hair. The rest of the Shinsengumi were stopped momentarily by the Aizu clan members, but followed me soon after.

I was well into the village by the time they came even close to catching up to me. A load of bodies lay scattered on the streets. I dashed into a collapsing building, tying a cloth across my mouth.

I crouched under the smoke and navigated my way through the rubble, finally reaching a disheveled closet. I tore open the door and took the quivering child into my arms, covering his mouth with another conjured cloth before ducking out of the building.

I cried out when part of the ceiling fell and, in an effort to keep the child safe, I threw my body forward, only to have the burning wood gash my leg.

I handed the child to a nearby Aizu clan member and tore off a piece of my shirt, tying it over the wound.

It had almost healed already, but the leftover blood would catch attention if I didn't wrap it.

The Shinsengumi had already started moving the injured away from the area. Hijikata ordered me to go with him and a small part of the group to chase down some of the Choshuu who were heading towards the mountains.

Great, I was up for a hunt.

We'd almost approached the bridge when the scent caught me. My eyes glinted in pleasure. Maybe I'd get to avenge Souji after all.

He was leaning on the railing, meeting us at the halfway point of the bridge. I was confident in our success until I met the red glare of his eyes. It didn't help when gunfire sounded in the village, but I couldn't turn back now.

The man attacked one of our soldiers, making the rest of our group stop, hands reaching for their blades. I knelt by the fallen man, Shinpachi by my side.

"Judging by the haori, you're the Shinsengumi."

I glared at the man as I used my teeth to tear at some cloth, angling my face away from Shinpachi to hide my canines. I looked over at Hijikata.

"He was at Ikedaya that night. Be wary, Toshi."

He pointed his blade at the man, his eyes lit up and narrowed. The man seemed bored, ignoring the blade.

"First you get in my way at Ikedaya, and now here you are again. I see you samurai bumpkins haven't had your fill yet."

He looked amused.

"Excuse me, you're not even samurai bumpkins."

Hijikata spoke up.

"Are you the skilled swordsman from Ikedaya? Your skills at provocation are rather low."

The bemused smile on the man's face disappeared, replaced by a scowl.

"I've heard that you're a group of talented rounin, but it appears that those were baseless rumors."

I tugged the cloth around the wound of our fallen comrade.

"Okita, was it?"

I jerked up.

"He was too weak to call a true swordsman."

I gritted my teeth in anger. Shinpachi rose to face the man.

"You can insult Souji as much as you like, but first I want to know why you attacked this man. If I don't like your reason, then I'll kill you right here!"

The man didn't hesitate.

"Because you lack the pride of a warrior and are the Bakufu's pet dogs, filled with nothing but the desire for power."

He turned to gaze at the mountain behind him.

"Why are you chasing men that have fled the battlefield after losing? Why don't you understand the Choshuu samurai's pride...as they headed to Mt. Tennozan to slice their own stomachs?"

I finally spoke up, struggling to keep the red in my eyes as mere flecks.

"So then it's alright to kill one person over another's pride? That's pretty pathetic."

His eyes shot to me, curiosity hidden within the bloody red pools.

"To fight only to protect one's image destroys any pride that might have once existed."

He gazed in to my eyes contemplatively, and my confidence began to dwindle. It felt as if he were unclothing me with those eyes, stripping me to the very essence of my soul.

"Then are you implying that it's ok for someone to lend their pride to the Shinsengumi so they can gather some merits?"

I didn't respond, too busy trying to subdue the instincts that told me to destroy this man and feast on his blood. Besides, he probably didn't have very appealing blood. Probably tasted like ashes.

Hijikata spoke up, replacing the absence of my voice.

"You sound so arrogant, but is that all you have to say?"

He looked up.

"Don't underestimate war. They started a fight over nothing and lacked the courage to fight to the end. Dogs with their tails tucked between their legs could never die with a warrior's honor!"

He relaxed, only slightly.

"They deserve to be beheaded. The honor of opening their own stomachs is wasted on those spineless traitors."

The man clutched his sword angrily.

"You mean to say that they should have been prepared to die for the war they started?"

Hijikata prepared himself accordingly.

"If they weren't prepared to die for a war they started, then they don't have even a drop of warrior pride. If they have any pride, then going all out on them is an appropriate parting gift."

Our warriors moved to surround the man, but Hijikata called out

against it.

"Idiots! Have you forgotten what your job is?"

He looked over at Shinpachi, who hesitated before grinning.

"Hey, I'm gonna borrow your men for a bit. Move out!"

He turned to look at me before running after them.

"Saki, look after him!"

I nodded, turning to watch Hijikata face his opponent. The man watched them leave.

"You bastards-"

"Heads up!"

The man dodged Hijikata's blade easily, the amused look returning to his eyes.

"Surely you don't think you can kill me?"

His words slapped me in the face, though they weren't directed at me. Hijikata didn't know what he was up against. I did.

"Hijikata, stop!"

He didn't spare me a glance, and the sound of metal clashing was thick in the air, almost painful to my sensitive ears.

The man's swings were all leveled and skillful, as even as Hijikata and his blade. The two swung at each other at the same moment, and I watched the man purposely loosen his grip.

A wicked smile laced his lips as he looked over at me. As the blade swung towards the injured soldier, I was given no choice but to cover him, allowing the sharp edge to cut me as it buried itself into the wood of the railing. Hijikata widened his eyes as realization hit him and he turned to look over at me.

I trembled as blood slid down my arm. The gash was concealed from Toshi's eyes, but not from the accursed cause of the wound. His view was unmarred as he watched the cut heal in a matter of seconds.

I covered it with a hand sat up, unable to look in the direction of the two men, who'd ceased their fighting. I didn't have to look to see that man's eyes look at me with insincere intent.

For the first time in a long time, I became frightened.

"Kazama! That's enough."

I caught his evil grin from the corner of my eye as a tall, red headed man walked near me and retrieved the blade. He didn't spare me a glance, but my eyes were murderous and defensive.

"You're well aware that the Satsuma clan has no need to fight the Shinsengumi."

He tossed the blade at Kazama, who caught it with ease, sheathing it and walking towards his comrade. The smirk clear on his face as he passed by, giving me a final evaluating look, in which I returned with my own angered, faltering gaze.

"I didn't think it possible, but I see it is."

He continued on as the man near me bowed, almost apologetic, and followed after. Hijikata put away his sword and walked over to me.

"Are you ok?"

He reached over as if to remove my hand to look at the wound. I recoiled, beginning to shake from the impact of everything that had happened.

"I'm fine, please don't touch me right now. I can handle it myself."

I knew the previously red specks in my eyes had turned blue, a clear sign of my distress. He gave me an assessing look before sighing and pulling back his hand. He held out some cloth.

"At least wrap it. Use this."

I nodded, reaching over timidly to take the cloth. I hesitated after making contact with his skin, then looked away and snatched the cloth.

After taking care of the bloody spot under Hijikata's scrutinizing gaze, we headed back. I draped the injured warrior's arm around my shoulder's and helped him walk along with us.

Shinpachi met us halfway, and another soldier took the injured man from me. I smiled gratefully and handed him over with ease. Shinpachi noted my arm and moved to speak, but Hijikata shook his head.

"They all committed seppuku before we got there."

My eyes widened in horror. Hijikata only laughed, though there was no humor in his voice.

"Suicide? Not a bad way to go, even if they were our enemies."

I remained silent while the two discussed briefly before we headed back to the village. I could help but clutch my arm where the cut had been. Physically, I was fine, but it was as if I had been infected. My grip grew stronger with each glance shot my way.

The fire in town had grown, and it took attention away from my arm for a time. We evacuated the townspeople and did what we could to stop the fire from spreading any further.

We returned to headquarters a few days later, greeted by the three who'd been left behind. Heisuke reacted badly to my wound. Sannan just gave it a quiet, educational look, almost as if he knew. However, it was a fact that he knew nothing. No one did.

Except for him. Kazama. I bit my tongue and turned to look at Souji, who gestured for me to go to him.

"Was it that guy from Ikeda?"

It was a very good guess. I couldn't bring myself to look at him, so I turned my head and gazed at the ground. My silence was enough of an answer.

"That bastard's gonna pay...if you ever let him wound you again...no, if you ever allow him to get anywhere near you again, I swear I'll kill you."

I chuckled, my voice dry.

"I'll lay down and accept it without struggle. Trust me, though, it won't happen again."

I should have known how false my words would have turned out to be.

End
file.